

JAMES JOYCE AND THE DIFFERENCE OF LANGUAGE

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CHAPTER I

Introduction: language(s) with a difference

Laurent Milesi

There is a delicate empiricism which so intimately involves itself with the object that it becomes true theory.

(Goethe)

JOYCE'S LINGUISTIC POETICS/POLITICS

Joyce's attempts to harness the effects of language and, increasingly with time, languages, may arguably be selected as the feature of his writing which mostly conditioned its technical transformations. Indeed, it is hard for a newcomer to the ever-expanding world of Joyce studies to miss the several time-worn pronouncements made by Joyce himself or, vicariously, by friends and fictional alter egos about his felt need to transcend the barriers of expressiveness set by the systems of existing languages.¹ Though such neat polemical slogans have too often been taken as programmatic, to the detriment of the elements of chance and fluidity that Joyce was increasingly willing to admit into the mechanics of literary composition, there is no denying that Joyce's *oeuvre* is best seen as constantly trying to inform an evolutive linguistic poetics – one which, I wish to contend, conditions, and therefore should remain central to, whatever interpretive avenue we choose to explore.

(R)evolutions

Although Joyce seemed to embark with each new work on a radically different experiment in literary language, it is more helpful to see the whole Joycean output as a discrete continuum in which apparently new departures in fact redeployed earlier narrative-linguistic habits in a different guise. Just as the structure of Joyce's various literary productions is more or less explicitly circular,² the 'technical' evolutions that they each enacted within an ongoing creative process must equally be seen as *revolutions*, in the

etymological sense of coming round full circle – and not merely as an acclaim *à la Jolas* of Joyce's linguistic breakthroughs. To give a succinct, yet convenient, illustration: the early selective epiphanic treatment of linguistic material and plot, which had presided over the composition of *Dubliners* and the reworking of the verbose *Stephen Hero* into *A Portrait*, was extended to the beginnings of *Ulysses*, still haunted by the joint classical principles of economy and intensity. Yet, as Joyce's 'stylistic odyssey' wrote more of itself, the discarded plenitude slowly found its way back, metamorphosed as the all-inclusive technique of composition that would likewise prevail in *Finnegans Wake*, where accretions, prompted by earlier lexical cues, dilate a narrative sequence to the extreme and shape dense thematic networks through narrative and linguistic recyclings. One may even still register something of the former epiphany in the multi-layered portmanteau word or syntactico-rhythmic modulations of the *Wake's* nonce-idiom, and what was once inconspicuous lexical sophistication 'simply' gave way to the more extroverted verbal eccentricities of 'Wakese', with the discreetly apophantic turning into the more overtly performative.³

Similarly, Joyce's 'Blue Book of Eccles' (*FW* 179.27) turned, past its half-way mark, from a sequel to *A Portrait* mixing stream of consciousness with third-person narration, into an increasingly self-reflexive work in which the narrative technique ascribed to each chapter is foregrounded as subject through linguistic, metadiscursive strategies. In *A Portrait*, the narrator's language, which gradually becomes more articulate and analytic as Stephen's intellect and capacities for abstraction develop, still serves as a focal point for the reader's access to the hero's maturation at choice moments. With *Ulysses*, however, Joyce felt the need to supplant the homely 'initial style', with its relatively (if deceptively) more conventional narrative agencies and unobtrusive stylistic devices, by a versatile style so as to render the protagonist's circuitous wanderings away from home in a single day poised between myth and realism (see *SL* 242: letter dated 6 August 1919). This in turn caused Joyce to recast and amplify most of the earlier episodes towards the end of his own Ulyssean peregrinations through forms and styles, as fiction writing shifted into a more metafictional gear, exploring new expressive forms for their own sake. Matching the Bloomian yearnings for Ithaca, the dialectic of such a (re)composition is best seen in the *Nostos* episodes, corresponding to the *Telemachia* in narrative modes but filtered through 'decharacterized' language and climaxing with the 'pure' enunciation of Molly Bloom's infinitely revolving thoughts. This evolution is thus inseparable from an increasing dissolution or, at least, problematization of neat entities like character and voice, as well as the boundaries between them, and, consequently, from the emergence of more polyphonic voices

which, in the 'pollylogue' (FW 470.9) or 'drama parapolylogic' (FW 474.5) of *Finnegans Wake*, will ultimately combine with shifting enunciative poles and a pliable linguistic medium to create erring discursive effects ascribable to a 'side' or 'role' in a many-faceted 'character complex'.⁴

If the growing tendency in *Ulysses* was to parody and perform operations on itself, or to satirize previous stylistic poses in some of its sections as the novel's composition progressed, the most encompassing gesture of this kind was to come with Joyce's ultimate creation. It has been repeatedly pointed out, on the basis of the headings in the *Scribbledehobble* or VI. A notebook matching chapter divisions in Joyce's previous works, that the *Wake*'s first design possibly included a thorough parodic reworking of the major stylistic attitudes struck so far, although more recent studies have challenged this canonical view of what Connolly's early transcription subtitled *The Ur-Workbook for 'Finnegans Wake'* by questioning its chronological priority.⁵ With no first-step narrative guideline such as the *Odyssey* to follow, and thus no definite idea of what structure and thematic principles should frame his new project, Joyce picked from rough lexical jottings and embryonic story elements compiled in the now familiar notebooks, often exploring anew old concerns from various narrative approaches, and composed disconnected sketches, later to become the work's anchoring points, scattered evenly throughout the book in order to ensure its cohesiveness. Whereas the Homeric wanderings of Joyce's Ulyssean heroes had made possible a fairly sequential mode of writing, the architectural problems that necessarily arose from the elaboration of random episodes entailed a less linear approach to composition and may have played a part in suggesting a cyclical structure for the new work as well as a novel linguistic system capable of informing it.⁶ In its panoramic one-day trip taken through discourses, idioms, techniques and styles available in the history of English language and literature up to the early 1920s, *Ulysses* had already featured a dozen foreign languages, mainly used to enhance motifs or for purposes of characterization. As a deepening continuation of the closing nocturnal mood of *Ulysses*, the linguistic babel of *Finnegans Wake* will extend the diachronic dissection of literary Englishes performed in 'Oxen of the Sun' to the much broader spectrum of seventy-plus of the world's idioms.

The linguistic politics of Hiberno-English

Don't talk to me about politics. I'm only interested in style.⁷

Yet Joyce's desire to fashion a language that would transcend all languages, beyond the reach of tradition and subduing all linguistic and historic

nationalisms and ideologies, cannot simply be seen as a purely aesthetic gesture proffered from the top of a lofty ivory tower by an elitist modernist 'self exiled in upon his ego' (*FW* 184.6–7). The cross between a highly particularized literary idiolect and polyglottal strands could only modulate into a politicized pluridialectal 'idioglossary' (*FW* 423.9) with a universalist, translinguistic as well as transcultural, slant – ultimately receiving the form of a xenolalic Dublin family microcosm in *Finnegans Wake*. The Irish capital as the particular city from which the essential universal could be extracted *a posteriori* provided the literal anchoring for the peculiar Joycean blend of 'nationalism' (if the linguistic politics of his Irishness can still be so called) and supposedly more typical modernist *cosmo-polit-anism* in his 'IMAGINABLE ITINERARY THROUGH THE PARTICULAR UNIVERSAL' (*FW* 260.R3).⁸ The fictional 'programme' of narrating the nation as a 'nonation' (*FW* 36.22), of reconstructing 'Irishness' down to its regional, local inflections⁹ within a literary practice redefining Realism, should be clearly set against a 'merely' parochial patriotism reared on the myth of an originary nativeness and cultural supremacy to be restored. Indeed it is Joyce's 'regional internationalism' – manifest in his interest in dialects or obscure idiosyncratic cants as much as forgotten or still dominant national languages – which enabled his imagined recreations of the detailed lineaments of a distanced nation to be shaped by a healthy spirit of localism, rather than lapsing into provincialism. Already in *A Portrait*, Stephen's *non serviam* was aimed at the nation's inability to extricate itself from reproducing the complicitous logic and structure of religious (or mythological), political oppression, and replacing external colonization by the internal tyranny of an artificial 'Celtic revival'. As Joyce himself put it to Arthur Power in 1921, in a typical aphoristic outburst indicative of his customary sense of literary grandeur but which could also summarize his own trajectory: '[The great writers] were national first [...] and it was the intensity of their own nationalism which made them international in the end [...]. For myself, I always write about Dublin, because if I can get to the heart of Dublin I can get to the heart of all the cities of the world. In the particular is contained the universal' (quoted in *JJ* 505).

The crucial moments in Joyce's search for a transnational literary language, at once prising open the complicity between the national and the natural and countering it through defamiliarization and babelization, have long been well documented, but some may be worth recapitulating here for the sake of our argument. Quite early in his novelistic career, Joyce the *poète manqué* opened up the language of narrative to the poetic effects of the foreignization or 'alienation' of English, from the latent lexical

defamiliarization in *Dubliners*, growing to an overt questioning of the 'so familiar and so foreign' tongue of tradition and subjection in the famous 'tundish' scene with the Dean of Studies in *A Portrait* (*P* 188–9), to a systematic attempt at depleting styles, idioms and idiolects, which will culminate in the carnival of linguistic vivisection and mimesis pitted against the foetus' growth in 'Oxen of the Sun'.

The opening story of *Dubliners* has been said to diffuse its trinity of 'paralysis', 'gnomon' and 'simony', with their diverse degrees of uncanny foreignness consensually noted by critics, to the structure of the whole collection, and its symptomatic attention to the sonority of the signifier can be traced down to such barely noticeable elements as the boy-narrator's fascination with the arcane terms of distillery, 'faints and worms' (*D* 10; see Tadié's essay). Throughout *Dubliners*, seen as an ordered collection of short stories, Joyce's 'poetic' writing channels the 'remainder'¹⁰ of/within language and foregrounds linguistic material at once on an individual, anagoristic level – even in the soft irony of the detached narrator's etymological pun on 'generous' and 'general' as a possible undercut of the tragic moment of Gabriel's self-epiphany towards the end of 'The Dead' – or as a ritualistic stage in a curbing process of socialization. All the more subversive since it wreaks its effects more subtly than in the later verbal eccentricities of *Ulysses* and the 'nat language' (night+not language) of *Finnegans Wake*, the ephemeral (etymological, phonetic, etc.) pun or linguistic slippage provides the aesthetic counterforce to this symbolic process of individual and collective formation or repression, whether in the dramatized, deflationary confusion of the diseased rheumatic with a desanctified pneumatic in 'The Sisters', the uncontrolled venal undertones of the preacher in 'Grace', or the cork's monosyllabic debunking in 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room'. Similarly, the famous *incipit* of *A Portrait*, with its resistant infantile *babble* and heightening of the sensuality of language as acoustic material, further analysed by Attridge and Docherty here, or the subversive dominance of presemantic sounds ('slop'; 'pick, pack, pock, puck' (*P* 41): earlier avatars of similar rhythmic tags in *Finnegans Wake*), are distant predecessors of the more complex *babel* of voices and tongues from which the 'purer' strains of a more demotic parlance can be extracted in the *Wake*.

This joint poeticization and foreignization of normative English cannot be seen outside a 'political' awareness of the coerciveness of the 'native' tongue, and exposing its own repressed foreign dimension through etymological recalls or syntactical manipulations conveying the idiosyncratic rhythms of *Dubliners*' speech was Joyce's way of devising a middle course of literary action between the imposed rigours of an English tradition and the

artificially revived nationalist orthodoxies of Irish Gaelic (cf. *Letters II* 187). As Joyce's texts incorporated a growing number of foreign tongues or emphasized the quaintly alien nature of defamiliarized English *within* English itself and not only through the miscegenation with foreign idioms, a synthetic idiom, questioning the analogy between the national and the natural, emerged whose only 'model' could be the linguistic compromise or 'middle voice' of Hiberno-English as well as various forms of creolization of English (see below): linguistic decolonization could be satisfactorily achieved only through hybridity.¹¹

Thus, by *Finnegans Wake*, 'purity' has paradoxically become a matter of *mediation*, with its political, ethical and even critical extensions. Joyce's implementation of a linguistic desire to exile the (familiar) language both from within and without and turn the familiar 'in-law' of language into a barbaric 'outlex' (*FW* 169.3), ultimately paved the way for a middle ground between aesthetics and ethics, poetics and politics. Far from the earlier conception of an idealized aestheticism *à la* Stephen Dedalus, Joyce's mature literary idiom took on a more fully rounded Bloomian generosity and acceptance, a more enlightened, anti-Cyclopean 'half and half' (*U* 12.1052–5), gradually reconciling itself with the joint poetics and politics of the vernacular in order to become a 'universalised Hiberno-English' in *Finnegans Wake*.¹²

The 'critical literary' in Joyce

Joyce's exposition of the limitations of literary-critical beliefs in organicity (the analogy between biological (Darwinian) and linguistic evolution), character, representation and mimesis, context and *exemplarity* (see Elam's essay) in several chapters of *Ulysses* and throughout *Finnegans Wake* should be viewed alongside his all-round linguistic relativism and undermining of theories by subversive literary counterpractices. Although he was firmly entrenched in historical linguistics and, from his student days, 'read Skeat's *Etymological Dictionary* by the hour' like his fictional counterpart (*SH* 26), the way he ransacked and ironically thematized a whole array of linguistic theories¹³ or his more conservative readings,¹⁴ as much as his more structurally important 'trellis' like Vico and Jousse, shows an awareness of the theoretical naivety of unqualified adherence to explanatory, analogical systems, historical etymologism as a foundation of linguistic truth, classifications into families, and the lure of taxonomies.¹⁵

Perhaps the common denominator under most of Joyce's tropic turns of creativity is a desire for 'signifying practices' that would lay bare the

weaknesses of linguistic categorizations for a truly innovative literary praxis, overreach Modernism's critique of the representational inadequacies of 'Realism' in order to venture into new stylistic territories – from the faithfulness of a rigorous mimeticism/mimesis to the antics of mimicry (e.g. Bloom's worn hat ironically masquerading as a 'high grade ha'; *U passim*) – and would ultimately lead to growing incomprehension from fellow modernists and former admirers like Pound. Rather than grope for the style(s) that would best capture a mood and be attuned to a theme in a restricted context, Joyce's fluid literary language allowed itself to become more and more freely magnetized by the subject matter, both at micro and macro levels (cf. e.g. the floral environment and tea motif surrounding Leopold Bloom as Henry Flower in 'Lotus Eaters'; the ubiquity of river names in the fluvial atmosphere of the 'Anna Livia' episode, etc.), and to operate in between literary practices and languages' taxonomic territories. It is arguably the cultivation of such a critical mood within an increasingly 'porous' literary idiolect that urged the necessity of a shift (back) to the aesthetics of expansion mentioned above – and eventually took Joyce beyond the modernist project of challenging the realist novel's traditional assumptions about/claim to verisimilitude and faithfulness through the 'scrupulous meanness' of the carefully crafted Dublin microcosm which his realist critics later froze into a kind of literary hyperrealism *avant la lettre*.

One major form that the critical within Joyce's literary experiments took was the exploitation, to the point of explosion, of a given 'programme' in order to probe the limits of its viability as a literary technique or as an interpretive framework. For instance, Joyce's deft parodic treatment of the catalogue, distended until its purposeful exemplariness collapses under the strain of overblown nominalization ('Cyclops', the titles of the 'mamafesta' in *FW* I.5, etc.), explores the breaking point past which a digressive technique engulfs the mainstream body of the text, and normative patterns of readerly recognizability and expectations cease to operate critically.¹⁶ Or else, still in *Finnegans Wake*, the implicit boundaries of any critical hermeneutics are questioned within the larger economy and signifying practices of the Wakean portmanteau idiom. In particular, the possibility of arresting the number of languages used in the 'final' text, from manuscript (notebook) evidence as well as a reconstruction of intentions from several conflicting echoes scattered throughout the *Wake*, must be set in a constant 'dialectical' tension with the work's irrepressible drive to exceed any such assignable bounds, its programmatic tendency towards encyclopaedic all-inclusiveness, and the untameable slipperiness of

its portmanteau idiom. More generally, it is our literary-critical preconceptions of acceptable stylistic, syntactical, lexical norms, as well as our critical choices – and their underlying cultural ideologies – that Joyce's out-and-out war on (literary) language and the strictures of its academic interpretations came to attack frontally, forcing us to ceaselessly discard 'institutionalized' theses and instead fashion a critically inventive *démarche* and idiom.

JOYCE'S CRITICAL IDIOMS AND THE CRITICS' JOYCEAN IDIOMS

Joyce's foresights: his critics' afterthoughts

One of the most original, 'self-reflexive' traits in Joyce's last novel is its ability to pre-empt – or, as Derrida aptly argued of Joyce more generally, hypermnestically pre-program¹⁷ – the interested speculativeness of our various interpretive biases and the ideologies that underpin them. In particular, *Finnegans Wake*, and more specifically its metafictional 'mamafesta' chapter (*FW* I.5), tantalizingly offers a foretaste of some of its future critical receptions and commentaries from historical (Marxist), psychoanalytic (Freudian/Jungian), philosophical-aesthetic and textual-bibliographical (or, now, genetic) perspectives, dispatching any one argument and its contraries under the fictionalized law of *coincidentia oppositorum* and satirizing their respective critical jargons and biases in choice prismatic distortions. (Particularly emblematic of the critical desire of Joyce's postulated 'ideal readers' is the 'Brotfressor's' compulsion to recuperate the four pricks inflicted by his fork on the precious manuscript at his breakfast table, which compromise the integrity of the letter to be analysed as they tamper with an originally unique signature; *FW* 123.29ff.)

In that respect, it is tempting to chart the evolutions of critical attitudes and adjustments to Joyce's linguistic/literary innovativeness as so many uncanny afterthoughts elaborating his own 'historical' itinerary recalled above. Such a course would go from a more traditional conception of fiction and literature, literary language (e.g. the role of punning and the hybridization of 'English'), and literary criticism (whose staunch, 'authorized' exponents were Gilbert and Budgen), to more recent views of literary language as a mixed medium of self-ironic, self-reflexive and self-critical *expressiveness*; from, for example, the confident conception of a presencing mimesis to the relativistic distrust of it as distant mimicry and ironic performance at the service of 'style'.¹⁸ Thus generations of Joyce scholars and readers have gradually shifted from an earlier focus on the mimetic powers and programme

of/in Joyce's fictional language – as supposedly embedded in the writer's several (sometimes conflicting) schemata – to an awareness of the assumptions underlying such a naive belief in language's illusory mimetic and organic ability, including the ability to be the spearhead of fictional experimentation. At stake here is the latter-day realization that, within the inbuilt critical dimension of Joyce's texts, representation 'itself' – a felicitous word which can be made to acquire aesthetic as well as political overtones – comes under scrutiny and is exposed, beyond its canonizable techniques and resources, to a reflexion on representability and representativity alike. Product (*signification, oeuvre*) therefore has given way to production or process (*signifiante, 'text' or écriture*) – including in the sense of the fascination of Joyce's 'embodied' language for the materiality of bodily productions; the mirror traditionally held up to nature has revealed the tain that enables its (self-)reflexions. Joyce's own itinerary would have thus uncannily anticipated the overall drift of (Joycean) literary criticism towards (self-reflexivity and productivity in) 'theory', and revealed the essentially historical constitution of our joint processes of reading and writing.

More fundamentally perhaps, another similarly metacritical retrospective could assess, in an equally, uncannily mimetic measure, the impact of the increasing problematization of self-reflexiveness in Joyce's compositional techniques and 'finished' works on writers and thinkers alike influenced by the 'critical' opening up within his literary idiom: for example, the self-conscious rewriting of *Stephen Hero*, the self-recyclings of Ulyssean prose in the novel's 'second half', the *Scribbledehobble* Notebook and the *Ur*-project of reworking earlier texts as well as their critical receptions for *Finnegans Wake*. Especially (though not exclusively) in the formative phases of their critical or creative careers, Derrida, Kristeva, Cixous and, belatedly, Lacan (to name but these) have turned their attention to the teasing complexities of Joyce's prose and have built on the subversive, self-conscious resourcefulness of the pliable Joycean text to elaborate new invigorating modes of discourse. To start with one inevitable example: the radical ambiguity and polyvalence of the liberating pun deployed in a versatile syntax dramatizes the 'pre-critical' moment of the interpretive choice in ways that have empowered Cixous's early feminist writings (mainly via *Finnegans Wake*), Lacan's own 'theoretical style' reflecting (on) *jouissance*, and strategies in Derrida's deconstructive practices.¹⁹ Or else, Joyce's constant probings into the mechanics of authority and ideology (national, domestic, etc.) and especially the fiction of paternity could be construed as having empowered his subsequent readers to read against the tradition of literary filiation,

including that within the Joycean corpus (from later to earlier text, from Joyce back to the Homeric source, etc.), patriarchy (feminism), political oppression (postcolonialism), etc. What the multi-faceted resilience of Joyce's fabrications has made possible – and why his novels have long been a privileged testing ground for new theoretical agendas and thus themselves stood the test of time – is his readers' (self-)empowerment through the very medium and fabric of his works, beyond the mere academic mapping of different theoretical grids onto his fiction. Joyce's linguistic dramatization of issues impacts the reader's own (pre)conceptions of them in ceaselessly renewed, dynamic fashion, forcing him/her each time to renegotiate how Joyce's idiom operates but also what the aesthetic and ethical implications of their critical positions are: what has best been described by two of the contributors to the present volume as 'Joyce the Verb' (Senn) and 'Joyce Effects' (Attridge; see Works Cited).

Thus there arises for us readers, poised half-way between Joyce's narrative foresights and our critical afterthoughts,²⁰ between production and consumption (cf. *FW* 497.1–2), the necessity to set up a dialogue or 'translation' between Joyce's writing and our reading practices, a 'middle voice' plying between Joyce's 'critical idiom' and our own Joyceanized idioms – of the kind that would prolong Senn's established practice of reading-as-translation (which does not merely elucidate the 'original' through a recourse to the lapses in existing translations).²¹ In such a strategic middle course of action, the limited gains from the showcasing of Joyce's texts for the stereotyped application or sounding out of the latest theories, soon to become new-fangled critical orthodoxies, would be profitably offset by the rewards from paying heed to the specifically Joycean *exempla*, which not only 'oblige' us to devise methodological tools from the Irish writer's own verbal arsenal (rather than the stock-in-trade of academic '-isms') but also empower us to do just that to creative and critical ends for theory 'itself', in ways that overreach the usual osmotic moulding of one's critical language on the chosen writer. Only on these conditions can literature bounce back on/against 'theory' – as is evidenced here by Garnier's and Slote's performative redeployments of (respectively) Deleuzian and, to a smaller extent, Derridean verbal strategies shot through with Joyceanisms – and can one be, critically as much as creatively, *in memory of* James Joyce.²²

In Joyce's wake: critical idioms beyond themselves

It is not surprising, in the light of Joyce's constant ironic tilt at the metalinguistic and metafictional dimension of writing, that his texts have fostered

ever-renewed critical developments ultimately capable of taking the reading of the Joycean corpus beyond the imposition of preconstructed analytic grids and allowing the 'theory' to be influenced and permeated by Joyce's own sophisticated idiom. In what follows I will select and briefly document in turn three of these generic, yet interrelated, 'critical idioms' within the panoply of the interpretive frameworks available to the Joyce scholar – gender, nation (but also class and race), history – to illustrate how these have profitably developed from *application* to *implication* after Joyce's example.²³ What I hope will emerge from this succinct panorama is the *Hermetic* cruciality of Joyce's 'language with a difference' as a heuristic tool, not only for the 'source text' but also in the reader's own idiom and procedure: just as Hermes stood at the crossroads as a mediator, messenger and agent of the Gods, holding the key to communication and interpretation, so can Joyce's innovative literary language be placed at the intersection of various critical fields (philosophy, linguistics/philology, gender (feminism, queer theory), psychoanalysis, politics, postcolonialism, intertextuality, etc.) in order to challenge their demarcations and, to use Elam's theme word, cast their exemplarity into a different light.

'mind your genderous' (FW 268.25)

No broadly historicizing survey of critical reconfigurations could afford not to give pride of place to the 'question of woman' as a pioneering matrix for the reopening of issues of (critical mediations of) literary representation – and how it itself inaugurated the broader study of gender and, later, stretched to those of race, which in turn played an interactive part in the more recent emergence of 'post-feminist' critical discourses.²⁴

Illustrative of the shift towards a disseminative plurality – the diversification of feminism into feminisms and towards a more global critique of the constructedness of gender – Joycean feminist criticism has evolved from early considerations of women's representations within the Joycean corpus (and the categorization of these on a scale ranging from an emancipatory feminist programme *avant la lettre* to a more reactionary patriarchal one) to more rounded analyses of the whole palette of plural gendered and sexual positions occupied by both sexes in Joyce's texts. Here again, such a broad trajectory is on a par with an overall drift throughout Joyce's *oeuvre*: from the problematic relationship between man and woman within still recognizable gender patterns or roles (the oversymbolized figure of the oppressive mother, the inadequate/idealized young female lover) to an exploration and valorization of ambivalence (Bloom as a 'half and half' versus the Citizen's Cyclopean politics of gender, nation and race; the epicene

'heladies' and 'shehusbands' (*FW* 386.15, 390.20) of *Finnegans Wake* as the grammatical counterpart to Bloom the androgynous 'womanly man' (*U* 15.1799)), reversals (Bloom's phantasmagoric feminization or transsexualism in 'Circe' versus Molly's 'virility') and interchangeability (not only the twins', as in the 'Prankquean riddle' of *Finnegans Wake* (see McGee's essay), but also the lipoleum boys' and the jiminies' in the 'Museyroom' episode; *FW* 8–10) – all contributing ultimately to the polymorphy of character roles and poles in the last novel.²⁵ It is therefore not fortuitous that Joyce should feature high on the list of male writers who have been eulogized for their generous depiction of femininity or their precocious exposition of clichéd, patriarchal constructions of woman and female narratives (as in 'Nausicaa') – despite the more recent corrective dissatisfaction with the limitations of the gender politics of male-dominated modernist aesthetics, its 'prescriptive erudition and formalistic rigor', as well as the radicalized view of avant-garde linguistic-literary experimentation *tout court* as elitist 'gender aggression'.²⁶

But the radicalization of sexual positions and gender constructions could not have been achieved without an exposure of stereotyped gendered language and the ruse of pronominal and syntactical indirections. As a self-conscious performance ironically flaunting assumptions about gender and sexuality in language, Joyce's later prose sets traps of recognizability and identification (e.g. the ostentatious play on 'male' (consonantal) versus 'female' (vocalic) rhythmic patterns in *Finnegans Wake*), making the reader aware of distinctions, as much as overlaps, between language and discourse (or *langue* as a system of reference versus *parole* as ideological praxis; cf. Tadié's essay), 'natural' repository and 'cultural' implementations. It is these subtler inscriptions of 'femininities'/'masculinities', homo- or bisexuality as performative effects in/through textuality which, once over the crest of early theoretical celebrations of the semiotic/presymbolic in Joyce in terms of irrational, fluid, female babble or as *écriture féminine*, a more mature feminist and broader gender criticism had to take into account.²⁷

This overall simplified trajectory is well captured in the editors' preface to *Gender in Joyce*, whose aim is 'not so much to argue whether Joyce has or has not bought into the ideology of gender stereotypes as to illuminate the process through which Joyce consciously and scrupulously (as evidenced by his abundant rewritings and manuscript additions/deletions) *constructed his language* – the vehicle of his criticism of the very ideologies he encodes and/or subverts through its use' (ix). In that sense (which also departs from the concerns of fellow modernists like Pound with kinetics and energy, and perhaps shows more affinity with Woolf's research into

narrative flux), Joyce's experimental programme of character deconstruction, and his groping for a textual movement destabilizing fixed points of reference, increasingly registered the spuriousness of such historical and cultural figments – including a history of the nationalist politics of linguistic-grammatical gendering.²⁸

'The eirest race, the ourest nation' (FW 514.36)

A nation is the same people living in the same place.

Or also living in different places. (*U* 12.1422–3, 1428)

At a juncture when the consolidation of the 1990s' critical shift towards issues of culture, history, ethics and politics, away from aesthetic reflections or considerations of 'textuality', has sometimes sadly entailed a waning attention to/awareness of the political constructedness of discursive effects in literature, reaffirming the centrality of language may wrongly be perceived as a reactionary step back to the heyday of a supposedly depoliticized 'poststructuralism'.²⁹ While there is no denying the validity and urgency in a recent project like van Boheemen's to look at ways in which the body has been dematerialized into discourse, including in postcolonial approaches to Joyce's texts,³⁰ it is equally imperative to remember that, for Joyce, politics (or ideology and history, for that matter) first and foremost materializes as 'style', and to note how his exploration of the plurality of discourses within his fiction's intracritical vein – just as one speaks of intralinear translation – evinces the inescapably ethico-political dimension of artistic experimentation.³¹ As Joyce put it – originally in French to an unidentified addressee – somehow echoing how Stephen Dedalus' Icarian flight in order 'to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race' (*P* 253) is inextricably bound up with the inventiveness of *fiction*, fabrication or even counterfeiting (cf. 'Forge ahead!'; *P* 12):³² 'the problem of my race is so complicated that one needs to make use of all the means of an elastic art to delineate it – without solving it' (*Letters I* 118; letter dated 5 August 1918; translation mine). No politics (of race, nation, but also of language) for Joyce without meditating on the language of politics which narrates it – according to a double tropic movement which we will also observe in relation to history.

Prominent in this reorientation is the forceful return to issues of nationalism and colonialism, within which Joyce's (via Stephen Dedalus') *non serviam* in *A Portrait* and ultimate disdain towards the concrete world of Irish (nationalist) politics came to occupy an uneasy position for those critics who more recently attempted to reinscribe his Irishness at the intersection

of the jointly emerging fields of Irish studies and postcolonialism. In the context of the denounced complicity between Western modernity (and, within it, the particular expression of male-dominated modernist aesthetics) and colonialism – as much as, in some of its cruder instances, the unqualified rejection of postmodernity/postmodernism along similar lines (despite the emergence of postcolonialism partly from some of the former's more provoking openings) – the relation between Joyce's fictional recreations of his *motherland/fatherland* within an overpoweringly aestheticized language and the real-world politics and ideology at work in a colonized state, then a new emerging nation dismissed by the artist, came to take centre stage.

There is perhaps no better succinct illustration of the uneasiness of this conjunction than in the trajectory which goes from Seamus Deane's pioneer essay on 'Joyce and Nationalism' (1982), in a poststructuralist context, to Emer Nolan's full-blown *James Joyce and Nationalism* (1995) in a post-colonial one. Whereas Deane could unequivocally put forward the view of Joyce's need to translate the ideological limitations of national politics (and history) into the aesthetic of a linguistically versatile fictional medium, thus repudiating nationalism in order to become a cosmopolitan modernist, Nolan problematically attempts to conceive Joycean Modernism and Irish nationalism as 'significantly analogous discourses' (xii), in ways that could sometimes be aligned with a more recuperative project of reclaiming Joyce back into a more recently sympathetic Irish tradition and heritage, within a complexified framework of relationships between (local) Irish nationalism and (global) cosmopolitanism, modernity and Modernism.³³

Such awkward aporetic overlaps, in the shifty history of academic discourses, between Modernism (with its felt tensions between cosmopolitanism and localism) or modernity (and its complicity with colonialism), and postcoloniality's ambivalent appeal to a politically problematic nationalism for purposes of emancipation, leave untouched the issue of the 'linguistic politics' of Joyce's increasing polyglottism within his imagined fictions of an Irish community. In this perspective, it can be helpful to recast the now well-established view of Joyce's literary language as translanguistic (and transcultural) babelization into a more politicized framework, as a manifestation of (and reflection on) processes of *creolization* in language. The manifold syntax of Wakeese would thus be seen to allow parallel narrative strands to unfold and compete simultaneously, dramatizing how issues of (post)colonial supremacy are indissociable from linguistic domination and emancipation in a multi-tiered narrative. Yet, conversely, Joyce's

synthetic idiom, especially in *Finnegans Wake*, can also be seen to perform the ambivalent condition of a *lingua franca* (cf. *FW* 198.18–19), at once bearing an uncanny affinity with the artificial tongues whose reductionist claims to universalism it also derides in the name of an avant-garde (modernist) aesthetic and recalling the dominant status of the English ‘language of the oppressor’ for communicative, trading purposes.³⁴ Like the ‘middle voice’ of Hiberno-English – whose internal lexical order interestingly reverses that of the older, ‘colonial’ appellation: Anglo-Irish³⁵ – the punning products of hybridization or linguistic crossbreedings and diaspora become valorized, in keeping with Joyce’s own early celebration of the creative hybridity of the Irish race and nation in his 1907 lecture on ‘Ireland, Island of Saints and Sages’ (see Jones’s essay).

Thus, more recently, the ‘limited compatibility’ (in the editors’ words) between the neo-canonized postcolonialist agendas and Joyce’s texts fostered the need to inflect the mature Joycean advocacy of middle grounds in yet another direction: the Wakean *semicolonial*.³⁶ Taking a leaf, or rather a felicitous nonce word, out of Joyce’s (last) book once again (cf. *FW* 152.16), Attridge and Howes felt enabled to put questions to a more clear-cut flavour of postcolonial criticism as it cannot simply be mapped onto the local, historical specificities of Ireland, stressing the inherent interdependency of traditionally opposed terms like native and foreign, colonialist and colonized, etc. rather than ‘merely’ endeavouring to promote the marginal and the ‘subaltern’³⁷ in an insistence on the emancipation of a subjugated nation-state. What Joyce’s ‘semicolonial’ language creations testify to, from the ‘so familiar and so foreign’ of *A Portrait* to the cyclical history of foreigner-become-native and son-become-father-overthrown-by-son(s) in *Finnegans Wake*, is the ultimately indissociable imbrication, from inside and/or outside, of the colonial and the national(ist), or authority and subjection, once accession to the fullness of an ‘independent’, self-authorizing voice is achieved.

Paradoxically for a writer still too often regarded as an elitist experimentalist on account of the dense language of his later works, the vernacularization of Joyce’s idiom and interpenetration of the mixed parlances of all social classes through the joint resources of a poetics and politics of style also works towards a democratization of the literary voice. Within the shift from textuality to culture noted above, this has led to a revaluation of Joycean Modernism’s relation to (the economics of) so-called ‘popular/low culture’ or mass culture, from the pioneer historicist work of the 1980s to a more recent focus on ‘commodity culture’ or a ‘psychoanalysis’ of

culture through the dissection of (representations of) objects of everyday consumption, and ultimately registering, in the prefatory words of the editors of the 1993 'Joyce and Culture' Conference proceedings, the shift from 'the force of culture on the writer' to 'the force of the writer on our own contemporary culture'.³⁸ In this domain too, the inward tensions and reorientations of critical debates have somehow mirrored Joyce's own evolution, from Stephen Dedalus' more detached, incorporeal aestheticism – deliberately aloof from the socio-cultural environment – to an openness towards, and re-embodiment of, popular or consumer culture through a more earthy ad canvasser (who dominates the 'second half' of *Ulysses*), culminating in the generalized collapse of low- and highbrow spheres in the transcultural polyphony of *Finnegans Wake*.³⁹ In this context, Bloom and Stephen's often debated mystical 'union' can be read as the reconciliation of (the languages of) economics and culture, of the ephemerality of the 'commodious' with the eternity of (high) art and the latter's embedding in history, production and social reality. Whereas the misogynist, homophobic young aesthete had pitted beauty in the literary tradition against its value in the market place (*P* 213),⁴⁰ Joyce's overall career from polemic (narrative-stylistic discrimination) to tolerance (linguistic and cultural all-inclusiveness) – best captured in the symbolic oscillations of the mother from a colonized yet repressive figure (*Dubliners*, *A Portrait*, *Ulysses*) to her acceptance as a primordial, though forgotten, social force (*Finnegans Wake*, especially ALP's concluding monologue) – gestured towards the more accomplished personality of the androgynous artist whose rounded versatility is staged through pronominal (impersonal) obfuscations.⁴¹

Yet there remains a more 'linguistic' flavour of culture that new concerns with the socio-historico-economic realities of everyday consumption and popular culture fail to acknowledge: the indissociability of the cultural-ideological substrata from Joyce's processing of them through variously thematized languages and idioms in *Finnegans Wake* – what I would like to call the 'geopolitical' nature of Joyce's international polyglossary, which goes beyond the 'radical historicity of words' and 'the inescapably textual nature of our understanding of ourselves and our place in culture and history'.⁴² This fact alone would help explain Joyce's renewed attention, for the composition of *Work in Progress*, to the Vichian philosophy of history and to Michelet's interest in it as an experimental tool to rejuvenate the language of (French) historiography. Vico's conception of language as a palimpsest of historical traces which encapsulate culturally dense etymological networks could be profitably harnessed as a 'trellis' in the vastly uncharted territory Joyce set out to explore from 1923 onwards.⁴³

'Languishing hysteria? The clou historique?' (FW 528.14–15)

History is hysterical: it is constituted only if we consider it, only if we look at it – and in order to look at it, we must be excluded from it.⁴⁴

Whether in Haines's patronizing apology – soon echoed by an ironic Stephen in 'Nestor' (*U* 2.246–7) – that 'It seems history is to blame' (*U* 1.649), or in the hallowed 'History [...] is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake' (*U* 2.377), the (self-)imposed strictures, from inside or outside, of *l'Histoire avec sa grande hache* have lent a wider backcloth to Joyce's verbal pyrotechnics than such outbursts have been construed to yield at face value. Indeed, as Spoo reminds us in his introduction to *James Joyce and the Language of History*, which details how nineteenth-century ideologies, rhetorics and styles of history impacted Joyce's early intellectual formation and are both figured and resisted in the Joycean text, 'Joyce's writings [...] are exemplary of, though unique within, the larger phenomenon of modernist historiography, which might be defined as the attempt to extend practices of aesthetic innovation to the representation of the past' (8). Redeployed between the ambivalence of French *histoire* (history and story), implementations in narrative, and representations of gendered writing, the category of history may be placed at the crossroads of the recent explosion of discourses on the excluded (sexual, colonial, racial, class, etc.) 'Other', *inter-* or *trans-* disciplines/perspectives, hybridity and difference, and, in a more simplistic, dualistic scheme, envisaged as a patriarchal, imperialist *logos* to be subverted by the *muthos* of a reinventive writing by an androgynous artist (see above). Thus, according to Fairhall, 'History, in *Ulysses*, is always masculine, always a chronicle of power and control whose paradigm is colonization. Feminine writing, then, becomes for the colonized subject the language of liberation' – turning teleological *his(s)tory* into a more epicene, cyclical 'hisstheory' (FW 163.25).⁴⁵

Joyce's perceived evasiveness, on the strength of his protagonist's pronouncements, might account for the confident dehistoricization of Joycean aesthetics in earlier criticism, which the recent trend of critical revaluations has attempted to rectify. Within the fashionable current of New Historicism or of any 'culturalist' perspective over the last fifteen years, the 1990s saw cumulative endeavours to revitalize the concept and category of history, and how it can be set to work in the (re)reading of literary texts beyond Joyce's own positions and fictional (re-)enactments.⁴⁶ As the editors of *Joyce and the Subject of History* dutifully noted: '[H]owever evasive Joyce himself may have been in relation to historical categories, his texts ceaselessly enact and reenact the problems of history and history writing' (8). The various

inflections to the several collective or individual projects that were conceived in the last decade reflect the 'interdisciplinary' miscegenation of history with the other dominant period debates, such as postcolonialism and especially Irish studies, and the 'return to subjectivity' or identity. To paraphrase the words of Thomas Whitaker, with which the preface to the selected proceedings of the Yale Conference on Joyce and History concludes: re-doing history means placing Joyce's texts and, within them, their characters in their socio-historical dimensions, at the crossroads of the ceaselessly renewed experiences of generations of readers in 'a more inclusive history of histories' whose assumptions have to be examined.⁴⁷ Such an overarching perspective – at a time when the 'subject' did not know any longer whether it had been successfully superseded⁴⁸ or whether it was after all coming back into fashion (namely via a renewed interest in autobiographies and constructions of identity) – may arguably account for the seductively ambivalent title of the later extended collection *Joyce and the Subject of History* already mentioned, with its ability to encompass at once our primordially as subjects of a process shaping our 'life stories' and the individuation of history 'itself' as subject beyond the prismatic distortions through which it is reductively apprehended. What has been rediscovered, in short, is the act of (personal or collective) (re)invention, of finding out for oneself through a process of enquiry that Charles Olson called *'istorin*, testing and contesting its factual sedimentations as historical narratives through the force of the subjective refashioning of truth as *poein* (poetics) or *fiction*, as much as the traditional distinction between historical truth (*logos*) and fictional fallacy (*muthos*).⁴⁹

However, in endeavouring to disenfranchise ourselves from the validations of Joyce's models of historical reconfigurations, we have been unwittingly following in his footsteps – or, to echo Derrida's words once more, our attempted liberations have in strange anamorphic ways been read in advance by Joyce – by extending to our own self-(re)empowerment as readers the very means whereby the Irish writer set out to free (his) art from the similar constraints of an exclusionary history in the first place (cf. Russell's opposition between history and art/life in *U* 9.46–53). What had afforded Joyce the self-dramatized 'subject of/in history' an emancipation from its determinist strictures was the minute probing into the mechanics of its oppressive narratives and into the language of history as truth-founding factuality at the service of a national, etc. ideology, away from the dry records codified by the pedagogical (nationalist) school textbooks in 'Nestor' (see *U* 2.46–7) to the reintroduction of the 'ousted possibilities' (cf. *U* 2.52) of '[c]ountlessness of livestories' (*FW* 17.26–7), which the serial, paradigmatic

narrative counteracting the teleological unfolding of plot in 'Wandering Rocks' had subsequently explored.⁵⁰

Joyce's storytelling operates at the critical junction between a language of history and a history of language, by framing various historical-linguistic theories as well as philosophies of history with a linguistic slant (such as Vico's and Michelet's). More specifically, the Wakean idiom thematizes the need for a historical dimension to language as well as the impossibility of a satisfactorily historicized linguistics, as its portmanteau idiom enacts the tension between synchronicity (system) and diachronicity (history). Seen from another, complementary, perspective, Joyce at once introduces a sense of historical stratification into the texture of Wakeese through Vico's ages, yet uses their cyclicity to anchor the plural narrative and relativize the sense of teleological, historical 'progress'. What Joyce's texts reveal is the paradoxical historicity at the core of the experience of fiction writing, which demonstrates how history is indissociable from its recreations as/in fictional narratives.⁵¹ History may well be (also) language but language is definitely *not* history...

Whether these increasingly hybrid theoretical reconfigurations of Joyce's fiction were the 'natural' extension of a broadly interdisciplinary, more pluralistic, critical climate, or whether Joyce's own texts demonstrably stimulated such fruitful cross-fertilizations, is perhaps an unsolvable issue beyond the scope of this collection. However, while the current miscegenation of discourses generously tries to live up to the more ethico-political spirit of their times, their thematic gain is sometimes achieved at the cost of a more performative practice: even when they are admittedly centred on Joyce's textuality, such studies risk reducing the issue of performance and process back to thematic representations and reference, no matter how problematized and pluralized these might be. Even Valente's edited collection *Quare Joyce*, which set out to query the dichotomy between 'queer' and 'square' in Joyce via the Hibernicism *quare* – 'a kind of transnational/transidiomatic pun' (4) used to inscribe the erotic indirections of Joyce's texts in critical language – while pointing out that such a strategy is in accordance with Joyce's 'much-celebrated subversion of the stylistic and generic proprieties of novelistic representation' (4), remains operative at the level of a singular programmatic catchword. It is such a performative gap or 'difference' that in particular Garnier's essay attempts to address and bridge here, in a critical style that incessantly plies between Joyce's idiosyncratic language and a 'becoming-Deleuzian' – without sacrificing the awareness that stylistic emulations, if not backed up by a sound 'analytic' procedure, may lapse into the symptomatic glorifications of Joyce's '[j]ouissance

opaque d'exclure le sens' occasionally evinced by Lacan's own canny *linguisteries*.⁵²

Perhaps the best way (not) to 'conclude' an 'introduction' – or to conclude 'differently' – is to adumbrate a series of questions whose centrality and relevance should have emerged, even if implicitly, from the previous pages and will form the distant critical horizon of the following essays:

- What does Joyce's encyclopaedic ransacking and interbreeding of discourses have to teach history, philosophy, psychoanalysis, gender studies, postcolonial issues of race and nation (etc.), as much as teach about (processes of) translation, issues of textual transmission, marginality and canonization, and how these lessons can best be enrolled to cut across the aforementioned 'disciplines'?
- In what ways does Joyce's language(s) constitute a privileged test-case of the 'difference' of/in language, and what are its effects on criticism's or theory's own idioms, including their ability to intervene in critical-theoretical debates (as in Slote's rereading of Derrida's interventions on Joyce and translation in the light of Joyce)?

The prominence of Joycean scholarship in the latest fashionable academic trends ultimately puts unanswered – and perhaps unanswerable – questions to the nature of (re)reading as a historically motivated act of external (re)appropriation, itself not devoid of ethico-political or at least ideological implications, or 'genuine' heuristic discovery. Indeed, Joycean scholarship can be said to offer a *representative* instance of how a writer's given texts are ceaselessly thrown under a revisionist light, begging the question as to whether, in renewed protocols of reading, each generation of critics domesticates literary works in order to vindicate its own critical agendas or whether it (also) exhumes so far hidden traces inherent in the artist's productions that had gone unnoticed until the emergence of the appropriate critical slant. Whichever way one inclines to solve this crux, I hope to have shown, in charting parallels between the literary turned 'critical' in Joyce's texts and the critic's own responsive fictions shaped by Joycean textuality, how Joyce's verbalizations are performative acts prompting his readers to promote his coinages into critical tools offering an intrinsically more suitable leverage on the writer's prose (cf. Senn's essay and long-standing work). It is our ambition in this volume to further document this necessity from a diversity of approaches and critical styles and to contribute to putting the critical language(s) of Joyce's fiction, as much as our subsequent fictional endeavours as critics, at such Hermetic crossroads of difference.